



## Rootlessness and Whirlpool of Simulation in John Fowles's *The Magus*

*John Fowles'un Büyücü Adlı Romanında Yersiz/Yurtsuzluk ve Simülasyon*

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**ÖZ**

Bu makalede, modern insanın geçmişle hiçbir şekilde bağlantı kuramaması nedeniyle, gerçeklik eksikliğinin karışık ve kopuk bir tarih anlayışına atfedildiği gösterilmektedir. Bu nedenle, yüzey seviyesinde mevcut bir durum, köksüzlük uçurumunu doldurma eğilimindedir. Herhangi bir çeşitlemeye yer olmayan böyle bir evrendeki her postmodern birey, sonunda milyonlarca insanla aynı ama tek başına kalır. Bu nedenle, modern dünyanın sıradan ve ilginç olmayan durumu, sonunda, her şeyin gerçek dışarının sözde çölünden daha büyüleyici ve daha az kuru görüldüğü hipergerçeklik dünyasına yol açar. Bu çalışma bağlamında postmodern insanın hipergerçekliğin görünen yapaylığından bıktığı veya gerçeği yeniden keşfetmeye çalıştığı ya da gerçeğin yokluğunun ardından kalan anlamsız boş araziyle yüzleştiği ileri sürülmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışmanın uygulanması, hipergerçeklik, simülasyon ve simülakrın postmodern birey üzerindeki kapsamının ve etkisinin ve bunun nasıl yönetilebilir olabileceğinin anlaşılmasını açısından önemlidir. Özetle, bu makale John Fowles'un Büyücü adlı romanının Jean Baudrillard'ın hipergerçeklik, simülasyon ve simülakr fikrini nasıl uyguladığını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makaledeki roman incelemesinin bir diğer amacı da, Baudrillard'ın modern evrenin çoğunluğunu oluşturduğunu iddia ettiği hiç bitmeyen simülasyonlardan kurtulma şansının hala olduğunu göstermektir.

**Anahtar kelimeler**

Simülasyon, Hipergerçeklik, John Fowles, Baudrillard, *Büyücü*.

**ABSTRACT**

In this article, it is demonstrated that the lack of reality is attributed to a confused and disjointed understanding of historicity since the modern person is unable to connect in any way to the past. Therefore, a surface-level and copycat present tend to fill the chasm of rootlessness. Every postmodern individual in such a universe, where there is no room for any type of variation, ends up being identical to the millions of others, but alone. Therefore, the ordinary and uninteresting state of the modern world eventually gives rise to the world of hyperreality, where everything appears to be more fascinating and less dry than the alleged desert of the real outside. In the context of this study, it is asserted that the postmodern person tires of the apparent artificiality of hyperreality and either strives to re-discover the real or confronts the meaningless wasteland left in the wake of the real's absence. Therefore, the application of this study is valuable in demonstrating an understanding of the scope and impact of hyperreality, simulation, and simulacra on the postmodern individual and how it may be manageable. In a nutshell, this article aims to look into how John Fowles's *The Magus* applied Jean Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality, simulation, and simulacra. Another goal of the article's examination of the novel is to demonstrate that there is still a chance to break out from the never-ending simulations that Baudrillard claims make up the majority of the modern universe.

**Keywords**

Simulation, Hyperreality, John Fowles, Baudrillard, *The Magus*.

## INTRODUCTION

The question of reality has always been an important topic in art and literature, and it has been prioritized in the literary field, especially after the second world war with the increasing influence of existentialism and postmodernism. Plato is one of the philosophers, probably the first one, who explains the concept of reality with 'the allegory of the cave' in his famous book *The Republic*. He expresses the awareness of the man who exits out of the cave by saying: "he was watching foolish phantoms, but that now he is somewhat nearer to reality" (Plato, 1920, p. 258). He has expressed the source of reality, but today the source of reality is not clear because today's people are dependent on social/digital environments, and media and they have the tendency to believe what they see and hear. This may cause the problematic issue of accepting what is served as true without questioning which also creates the problem of manipulation. Jean Baudrillard in his famous work *Simulacra and Simulation* explains our real-like world and gives a perspective on the effect of culture, society, and media on reality. To him (1994), the universe people live in is a simulation, and everything is lifeless, nothing is more than a vision. In his opinion, a simulacrum is a copy that has no original; it is a truth by itself and a simulation means a mixture of representation and reality, in a way it indicates absence. And simulation, thus, is opposite to representation because representation is an imitation of something that has a real referent, and in that sense, "a strange shift occurs in assessing what is real, what is virtual, and what lies in the complex zone in-between" (Bertens, 2016, p. 90).

Baudrillard (1994) gives Borges's tale as the best allegory of simulation. There is a map drawn for the emperorship, but nobody realizes that real territory and map are not the same things. When empire collapses and a map has been found in pieces after the years, it becomes a symbol of the emperorship's essence. So, if a root that has no real referent is derived by the models, simulation or hyperreal occurs, which implies that simulation tries to destroy the relation between reality and illusion.

Saying that he did not have a coherent idea of where he was going in life, John Fowles started to write his work *The Magus* both to show the situation he was in and to describe the fragmentation of the individual living in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This novel, basically about a journey, told the story of the main character, Nicholas Urfe, that started in England and extended to the Greek island of Phraxos. Within this story, there were many elements of intertextuality, metafiction, allusion, and existential questioning. However, despite all these elements, the narrative was told in a structure based on truth and illusion. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that *The Magus* is a postmodern *Odyssey* in terms of containing travel and adventure elements, as well as touching on issues such as self-realization and self-awareness.

*The Magus* focused on the problem of reality and this problem occurs in Nicholas Urfe who goes to an island called Phraxos in Greece as an English teacher in Lord Byron School. Everything begins in London and it represents the real world in the novel. He has an Australian girlfriend named Alison who is also representative of reality, and events continue in Phraxos which is an extraordinary world for Nicholas. Phraxos fascinates him with all its beauty and mythological references. He feels as if he is in 'Alice's Wonderland'.

Moreover, this place means mystery to him because before going there, he learns some clues from Mitford who has been an English teacher before him at the school. Mitford warns him to keep away from the waiting room (salle d'attente). Another reason why he wants some adventure is that he feels alone on the island, and also he tries to kill himself to escape from the reality. Namely, he is an inauthentic man who does not have his reality to hold on to. So, he becomes wholly absorbed in Conchis's godgame. Conchis is a mysterious old man who creates an environment of simulation in Phraxos for Nicholas.

In this article, I tried to answer the questions of reality and illusion in the contemporary world with reference to Baudrillard's idea of simulation and how Fowles's Nicholas Urfe looks for something to hold on to not to be highly influenced by the sense of loss and meaninglessness. Thus, the article brings forward the theory of simulation by Baudrillard to make a connection between the concept of reality and Nicholas's perception of illusion as well as the condition of the postmodern subject in terms of rootlessness and multiplicity of truth.

### ROOTLESSNESS AND WHIRLPOOL OF SIMULATION

The postmodern subject is severely drawn into crisis as the theory itself departs from the reassuring and structuring grand narratives. According to Maria Beville, "the postmodernist disbelief in the concept of reality leads to the meaninglessness and absurdity that characterize postmodern existence" (Beville, 2009, p. 48). In the age of dissolution and death, seeking meaning and belonging are futile endeavors where "no objective truth exists" (Beville, 2009, p. 48). Hence, upon leaving college, Nicholas states that "I [He] had got away from what I [he] hated, but I [he] hadn't found where I [he] loved, and so I [he] pretended there was nowhere to love" (Fowles, 1979, p. 17). Therefore, as the postmodern individual suffers from the aforementioned sense of being lost and having no roots at all, Nicholas enters into hyperreality since he is devoid of any comforting and meaning-regulating principle in life.

Becoming fragmented and dislocated have been used to describe postmodern subjects. Being disconnected from the past or any other organizing principle is the cause of this situation. As an orphan without any sort of familial connection, Nicholas Urfe in *The Magus* is a great illustration of a postmodern subject who has lost the connection to the grand narratives. He is thereby disconnected from the past, in that sense, "the archetypal quest pattern is more overtly presented in Fowles's second published but first-written novel, *The Magus*, a work of great complexity" (Onega, 1996, p. 40), especially in terms of reflecting the continuous complex and confused state of its protagonist with his lost sense of connection with the past.

Another point about Fowles's protagonist in terms of experiencing the sense of emptiness and being lost can be seen in how he is not a believer in the religious sense which may also reflect the point of rejecting grand narratives in the postmodern perspective. Questioning life, trying to find a center to hold onto, struggling with the sense of rootlessness, and fighting for something authentic, Nicholas Urfe shows how all the aforementioned issues of confusion and complexity are reflected in parallel with becoming a non-believer in the religious sense. It seems consistent in the sense of Nicholas's identity and questioning that he does not represent a personality of a believer with all the other examples of emptiness and lack of meaning in his life.

"Nicholas, the 'anti-hero' of *The Magus*, undergoes a process that is similarly traumatic, and likewise comes to significant realizations about destructive social roles and the performance

of identity" (Lenz, 2014, p. 149), and it was clear from the very beginning that Nicholas Urfe's story, which began in England, would not continue there. "Analyses of the novel that emphasize the theme of existentialism offer great insight into Fowles's philosophies and indeed provide a key component of the protagonist Nicholas Urfe's struggle to discover his most authentic self" (Hurwitz, 2015, p. 447), and Urfe prepared the reader for a mysterious journey with the sentence "I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. A new land, a new race, a new language; and although I couldn't have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery" (13), felt "relaxed and free" (11) after losing his family. "By identifying with such fads, chiefly because they would have shocked his now-dead parents, he has, in fact, become nothing except a mask" (Raper, 1988, p. 64), and he was a solitary individual now without roots, and he planned to use his newfound freedom on a mysterious journey. During his time in Oxford and its environs, Urfe did not find what he was looking for with the Les Hommes Révolte group, where he debated existentialism, the meaning of life, escape, and meaninglessness. "Existential freedom, in other words, has become more clearly defined as an acceptance of the heterogeneity of ways of seeing" (Ferrebe, 2004, p. 222), and realizing that he could not escape the emptiness he fell into in England, he decided to go to the Lord Byron School in Greece. His expectations were to add something meaningful to his life as a result of this decision, which he thought would be both a change and an escape.

After the second world war, the mood of the individual who was intertwined with the postmodern situation was defined as incomprehensible, fragmented, and ambiguous. The postmodern individual was constantly in search of a sense of belonging, and he was doing this in a time when fragmentation was experienced in all areas. Expressing his depression and loneliness with the sentence "I am only happy when I forget to exist" (38), Urfe had most of the features seen in the postmodern individual. He, who repeatedly stated that he wanted to escape from reality, aimed to reach a new life, a mysterious experience, and a subjective understanding of reality in Greece. Expressing his excitement as soon as he went to Greece, Urfe prepared himself for a new start. Apart from his job at Lord Byron School, the first thing he wanted to do was explore.

When the individual feels himself in a fragmented structure, it is not possible to reach a sense of belonging in a real sense. Therefore, pursuing mystery and discovery was both exciting and important for Nicholas Urfe to feel like he belonged somewhere. The postmodern individual reveals a unique style while escaping from himself, time, space, or reality, and Nicholas's style first starts with discovery. Having experienced the first result of this process by discovering the island of Phraxos and the villa Bourani, Urfe is about to face countless experiences between reality-illusion and reality-representation.

Stating that the contemporary culture cannot distinguish reality from the image, Jean Baudrillard defines simulation as follows: "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1994, 1). Therefore, when talking about reality or a fact without roots, he uses the concept of hyperreality and uses this word to express situations where the difference between reality and representation cannot be distinguished. As Baudrillard understands, originality and authenticity do not exist in hyperreality. Original is lost, the images ceaselessly fabricate themselves, which reshape human relations, the conception of reality, meaning, and the medium of communication, and "it is the hyperreal

that we recover because to talk of the reality of a memory becomes non-sensical. If our pasts are a series of memories of constructed images, then recovering those reconstructed images operates as a kind of recovery of what passes for the authentic" (Bentley, 2007, p. 494).

The characters, events, experiences, and relationships that Nicholas Urfe will encounter in Phraxos will reveal the concept of hyperreality defined by Baudrillard. Meeting with Maurice Conchis, the owner of the villa Bourani, means a turning point in his life for Nicholas, who continues to experience intense depression and disappointment after going to Greece, and even considers committing suicide. With stories, historical events, theatrical performances, and confusing conversations, Maurice Conchis will lead Nicholas step by step into a complex and surprising game, and "the build-up to Nicholas's first encounter with Conchis and the start of the godgame emphasizes the contrast between Englishness and Greekness while intensifying Nicholas's desire to enter into an imagined authentic Greece that exceeds his comprehension" (Hurwitz, 2015, p. 455) in terms of representing a multiplicity of identities within one body.

Deeply experiencing "exile from contemporary reality" (Fowles, p. 52), Nicholas is in a mood to be swept away because he has no center to hold on to, as he describes himself as "urban and rootless" (53). Nicholas "feels that he is filled with nothingness for days" (55) and realizes that he is faced with a "feeling of abandonment" (55). The fact that he has moved away from basic concepts such as a sense of belonging, absolute truth, reality, and meaning has led him to hyperreality, mystery, discovering new things, and self-realization. Nicholas, who is about to experience Baudrillard's concepts of simulation and hyperrealism intensely in Phraxos, while being dragged towards the spider web-like games of Maurice Conchis, described the mood he was in before these as follows: "I was and always will be false, not authentic in the existential sense" (59). From this description, it becomes clear that Nicholas is already detached from reality and has no center to cling to.

For Nicholas, who started to experience examples of mystery and illusion as soon as he met Conchis, the villa Bourani will play an active role in the formation of a sense of belonging. The problem is that villa Bourani, which is effective in Nicholas's process of having a sense of belonging, has a quality that meets the concepts of representation, illusion, and hyperreality. This is an indication that Nicholas will feel that he does not belong to reality or truth, but an illusion, representation, or fictional performance. Conchis, who clearly expressed what kind of a process awaits Nicholas with the sentence "there is a lot more to be discovered before you" (83), had made every preparation for the labyrinths he set up to take action. Nicholas described the situation created by the people and events he encountered, full of mythological and literary references: "uncertainties, unexpected things" (87).

Nicholas's hyperreal domain, Phraxos, will lose its reality once it is discovered, much like the tribe that ethnographers have discovered in Baudrillard's example. He states that "in order for ethnology to live, its object must die; by dying, the object takes its revenge for being *discovered* and with its death defies the science that wants to grasp it" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 7). Thus, the same is also true for Bourani as Nicholas states "... even the proximity that Alison's coming to the island might represent, was unthinkable. Whatever happened, if I met her, it must be in Athens" (Fowles, p. 203).

Phraxos as a hyperreal domain can be likened to Disneyland because, to Baudrillard (1994), Disneyland is a play of illusion and fantasy. It is a microcosm of America that hides boring and ordinary life, and “the hyperreal Disneyland functions not as an imaginary fantasyland distinct from the real America outside the theme park, but rather to conceal that all of America is Disneyland, replete with infantilization and phantasmagoria” (Kline, 2016, p. 653). In addition to Baudrillard’s analysis of Disneyland, Zygmunt Bauman (2003) states that hyperreality reveals the excess of everything and America creates a simulation that has no end. Phraxos like Disneyland is a machine of confusion and destroys that relation with reality. Everything begins with simple steps such as smells, rings, footsteps, etc. to enter the total simulation. Nicholas finds a book and a towel with a woman’s perfume scent and hears the ring after a piece of music. Then, he begins to search Conchis and decides to meet him after seeing a clue in Leverrier’s letter to Conchis. And he usually sees Hermes, Conchis’s old messenger, as a kind of representation, who does not have excessive power like the one in mythology. Conchis meets him as if he is waiting for him and Nicholas sees an anthropoid look on his face, then he likens his smile to the smile of the stone head, a piece of simulation because the smile on the stone head seems more realistic to him and Conchis pretends to imitate this smile. His villa Bourani is also a piece of simulation because there are original portraits, models, Poseidon statue, etc. While leaving the villa, he sees a woman’s glove that has the same smell as the towel. It seems that everything has been organized for Nicholas.

Before making direct references to experiences such as illusion, reality, hyperreality, and simulation, Conchis mentions the factor of luck and that luck has considerable control in human life, in conversations with Nicholas at the villa. While asking the question “Do you feel chosen by anything?” (88), he points to the whirlpool into which Nicholas was dragged, but although Nicholas says he “does not believe in god” (89) and is not “the chosen one” (89), Conchis reiterates his power and authority by saying that “chance has many faces” (89). In fact, we have enough evidence to suggest that these expressions are used ironically, from Maurice Conchis’s suggestive speeches, to say that Nicholas did not come to Greece and villa Bourani by chance to have all these experiences.

Dialogues between Nicholas and Conchis in the villa resembling a labyrinth covered topics such as history, mythology, literature, and art, among which the interpretations of the novel genre contained important determinations between reality and illusion. Conchis’s sentence “novel is no longer a form of art” (98) on the one hand directly referred to the fictionality of the work in the hands of the reader, on the other hand, it also contained allusions to the structure of life and reality. Besides, “why should I struggle with hundreds of pages of fabrication to get to half a dozen scraps of truth?” (99), there was a serious competition between reality and fiction for Conchis, and this competition would give Urfe very important experiences. That Nicholas sees the portrait of Lily, Conchis’s fiancée, is important preparation for simulation because Lily seems realistic, on the other hand, Conchis says “I travel to other worlds” (Fowles, p. 109), and this statement confuses Nicholas, because how can Conchis travel to other worlds? By reading novels? No, that is not the answer for a man who does not believe in fiction. Maybe with his plays within plays? The answer is unclear. In addition to rings, footsteps, smells, strange bird calls, etc., Conchis tells stories as if he has experienced these events before. One of the stories is about Lily, war, and Conchis himself. He also creates suspense by leaving the story incomplete and open to interpretation.

On the other hand, Nicholas hears footsteps while listening to him, but Conchis behaves as if he does not hear: "something was trying to slip between me and reality" (123). This reveals that Conchis begins to be successful in detracting Nicholas from reality. He tries to take part in Nicholas's mind with his detailed narratives and with misleading clues. When he sleeps in Conchis's villa, he hears the English march and feels the terrible smell of the sewer. So, the stories have relationships with the events Nicholas has experienced or he will experience.

At another time, he sees a little girl and a man who resembles Robert Foulkes. These figures suddenly disappear like ghosts. One night he hears Conchis's cembalo and sees Lily who smiles at him as if Conchis does not realize that they look at each other. At first, this woman can be the ghost of Lily, but he does not believe in ghosts. Then, Conchis is a madman who has a mistress, similar to Lily. To follow how Fowles reflects those versions of simulations in the novel through characterization, we need to focus on the structure of the images which are to Baudrillard (1994), there are four orders of them. The first order refers to the basic reality. In terms of this first order, the thought that Lily is not a ghost is clear. Nicholas can distinguish, but he is gradually deceived: "As if the world had suddenly, during those last three days, be re-invented, and for me alone" (Fowles, p. 160). He is in a masque play directed by Conchis. Conchis wants Nicholas to treat Lily as if she has lost her memory. And he says that she is not the real Lily and also not a person who imitates the real Lily. For Nicholas, they are actors and actresses and Conchis is the director or the god figure because Lily says that he sees and hears everything.

Conchis's other story is about Alphonse de Deukans, and the story is intervened by a bugle-call. Some figures begin to appear in the dark at night. Apollon seems as naked and a girl figure runs because a figure of a satyr runs after her. Another woman figure throws an arrow into the satyr. Suddenly everything is finished. It is like a mythological theatre play in the eyes of Nicholas. At another time, he sees Lily's twin sister immediately after he leaves Lily, but he realizes that she is not the real Lily because she does not have a scar on her wrist. According to the first order, he can distinguish that these mythological figures, the man, and little girl figures are not real, and he can realize Lily's twin easily even though at the beginning Conchis and Lily have denied the presence of a twin all of which create a sense of an illusion and a hyperreal world where it is possible to get lost and exposed to an abstract whirlpool.

Lily appears in different costumes. At first, she wears a white dress that belongs to the Edwardian era, then she paints her face while reading a section from *The Tempest*. At another time, she will be in modern clothes when Nicholas thinks "Lily's dead" (289). She says that her real name is Julie Holmes and her twin is June, not Rose. However, Conchis states that she is only a schizophrenic patient, so she needs different identities. And he wants Nicholas to meet Alison and to keep away from Lily. That Conchis continuously asks about Alison is a kind of test for Nicholas that measures his bond with reality. Nevertheless, Nicholas is already influenced by the magic of Lily and even in his dreams, he gives place to Lily, not to Alison anymore. On the other hand, he wants to obey Conchis because he is afraid of being dismissed: "I simply wanted to see them; to know they were there, waiting for me" (248). When he goes to meet Alison, he feels as if he is coming from another world. He is still under the influence of Conchis's hypnosis and he does not want reality to destroy the phantasy. The phantasy and illusion provided in Phraxos seem realistic for Nicholas, and he tells a lie to Alison that he has syphilis, but he sleeps with her and he images Alison as if she is Lily/Julie. That he pictures



Alison as Lily is a kind of pornographic effect and “though Nicholas reports being repeatedly warned that things at Bouráni are not what they seem, he assumes that his developing relationship with Lily/Julie is more transparent, especially in moments of sexual intimacy” (Lenz, 2014, p. 151).

In *Seduction*, Baudrillard (1990) says that pornography is only a caricature. Namely, Nicholas wants simulation much more than the real. On the other hand, he wants to keep both: “It wasn't that I wanted one more than the other, I wanted both” (Fowles, p. 274). Nicholas does not want to lose the bond with reality, but fantasy predominates. When he tells everything to Alison and becomes hysterical, he disgusts her. On the other hand, when Julie behaves hysterically, he finds this situation more realistic. In the second order of Baudrillard, the line between reality and illusion begins to blur, and the image subverts reality. The thought that Lily is a schizophrenic patient is not clear. Baudrillard (1994) gives an example of a madman who acts very well, and he says: “If he is this good at acting crazy, it's because he is” (4). That is why objective evaluation is not possible in simulation.

When June instead of Julie comes near the Poseidon statue and mentions the ‘Three Hearts’ story, a caretaker named Joe appears for a moment. This man is like a nigger version of Henrik who takes part in another story of Conchis, about Gustav Nygaard. Nicholas remembers Deukans's story and his puppet gallery. So, all these people including Nicholas are puppets of Conchis. On the other hand, Julie brings various real-like documents as evidence. Nicholas thinks that he has made a deal with twins against Conchis.

Baudrillard (2000) says in *The Vital Illusion* that “twins seem to be like two halves of a single self, of the same individual” (12). With June, who seems like another version of Julie (doppelganger), the relation between reality and representation is blurred. From a different viewpoint, it can be stated that Nicholas likens everything to fictional characters. For example, Conchis is Prospero, Julie is Miranda, Ophelia, etc., this reveals that he is away from reality, close to fiction, i.e. simulation. When he sees Julie as Miranda and himself as Ferdinand, he cannot create a unique love. The reason that he thinks this is love is because of Julie's behaviors and her physical intimacy with him. While he is experiencing physical pleasure, he also feels physical pain with the vitalization of war in the forest where he suddenly finds himself in a war. The German soldiers, who are hyperreal, come, and he hears an explosion. He tries to believe that this is only a part of the play. However, he sees a guerrilla tortured by the soldiers as if the guerrilla is not an actor. Everything seems real in the war scene. He gets confused about which one is real or an illusion. He witnesses the cruelty of hyperreality. He takes a letter from Conchis that he does not want him to come there anymore. Nicholas supposes that the war scene is the final scene. Then, he learns with some real-like documents that Alison has committed suicide. He turns to reality for a while, but it does not take so long. This hyperreal play can be likened to in-ye-face theatre that catches the audience and shakes until s/he becomes aware. On the other hand, this war is like the one in 1943 as a representation, but also it gives real feelings to him. So, the war play is a simulation, and “in the semiurgic society, the object lost its use value and its exchange value and reappeared as a function or sign value. The interest is not in the objects but in the system of signs which mirrors them” (Thiry-Cherques, 2010, p. 3). In this sense, Baudrillard (1994) says that war is no less atrocious even if it is only a simulacrum.

For Nicholas, his conversations with villa and Conchis caused nothing but confusion, but for someone with a rootless, fragmented self who had lost a sense of belonging, confusion, mystery, and luck seemed to be temptations to pursue. Although Conchis gave some clues to Nicholas by saying, "I am a psychic" (103), Nicholas considered it a result of the luck factor. Whether Conchis was a psychic or not was very important to Nicholas, but his inability to get clear answers to the questions he asked himself caused him to oscillate between reality and illusion. Unable to grasp Conchis's sentence "I have lived a great deal of life in other centuries" (108), Nicholas seemed still not ready to break free from the traditional point of view: "We were taught to assume that what cannot be expressed in words cannot be expressed in any other way" (109).

Conchis, while giving information about his past in order to satisfy Nicholas's curiosity, started to talk about the historical narratives that took place before and during the first world war. Realizing that the concept of reliability is strengthened from time to time with the sharing of these narratives, Nicholas tries to visualize who the historical figures in the narratives are, and during these narratives, he thinks he sees one of the figures in the narrative outside the villa. At a time when the line between fact and fiction becomes increasingly blurred, the astonished Nicholas expresses his mood with the sentence "perhaps I am expected to see something that I was not clearly wanted to see" (123). Moreover, one of the most striking sentences that indicates the confusion he experienced is uttered when he states: "I had a strong feeling that something was slipping between me and reality" (123).

While Conchis's stories about historical events and people serve as an important reference to the opposition of postmodernism to meta-narratives, they increase the variety of mind games played against Nicholas and enable hyperreality to be experienced in every sense. These conversations, in which an open criticism of war is made, and the meaninglessness of war is emphasized with the statement that "this is how war corrupts people, it makes us play with our own pride with our own free will" (125) turns into labyrinths that are difficult to get out of for Nicholas. As Conchis's questions about the veracity of his stories increase, the line between reality and illusion gradually fades. This is manifested both in historical narratives, in the figures Conchis mentions, and in other people in the villa.

The past or history are elements that people often refer to, remember with longing, learn from and leave a mark on their minds, and "displacing the realities they purport to honor in their quest for the pure commodification of social life" (Nitsch, 2015, p. 47). However, according to Conchis, "one of the ways society controls luck is to say that the past was more noble than the present" (130). To prove that this is the case, Conchis tells Nicholas about a game played in the war and wants him to experience the rigged dice as well, gives the dice to Nicholas and tells him to roll. The power and influence of the concept of luck in human life also refer to the absurdity of life and its structure beyond the control of the individual. In this respect, "Baudrillard focuses on the symbolic dimensions that he feels would be lost with asexual reproduction. For Baudrillard, the clone cannot enter into any of the dramas of socialization and identity—essentially Freudian dramas—that have their roots in sexual reproduction" (Marks, 2010, p. 342), and for Nicholas, this game of rolling the dice represents being in two minds between the historical text and his experience in narrative time. It becomes more difficult for him to understand what is real and what is an illusion, and the fact that the roll of the dice comes once and results in a death sentence causes new questions to begin in his mind. Since

the dice are a copy of chance, the result is a copy of a copy whose roots cannot be reached. Nicholas has already embarked on an irreversible path in these countless copies.

Lost in the historical narratives, Nicholas interrupts his Conchis stories and goes to his room in the villa, but begins to hear voices before he goes to sleep. He gets up from his bed, leaves his room, and looks out the window at the garden to check where the sounds are coming from. The sound he hears is similar to a human hum, but he cannot make sense of it and realizes that he is wandering "on the border between illusion and reality" (136). This border has become Nicholas's most frequently used path, and since he is increasingly distant from reality and chasing mystery and illusion, he has become an important representation of the idea that there is no objective reality.

The blurred line between reality and illusion can also be seen in the selves of the characters in the novel because from the beginning to the end we see how Nicholas keeps mentioning the rootlessness of his identity and how he is surrounded by emptiness and meaninglessness. That is why all these are explained in different parts of the novel by Nicholas and Conchis, and to them, life is like a theatrical play in which we all have our roles: "We are all actors here, my friend. None of us is what we really are. We all lie some of the time, and some of us all the time" (411). To Conchis nobody shows their real faces. However, Nicholas cannot understand this saying's deep meaning; he continues to make a literary relation and thinks that it is a kind of meta-theatre. Conchis tries to wake him about some things and expresses his problem: "You wish to be liked. I wish simply to be. One day you will know what that means, perhaps" (416).

Katherine Tarbox (1988) points out that Nicholas has a big problem in understanding the difference between fiction and reality, sincere feelings and fake ones, identity, and persona. Conchis tells about the war with real documents on the cinema screen. Even today history is told via technology so how trustworthy it is debatable. After Julie's pretense of being kidnapped, Nicholas finds two clues: a baby (represents Julie) and a skull (Yorick's head in *The Tempest*). It means that the simulation continues: "Hypotheses pinned me down, as Gulliver was pinned by the countless threads of the Lilliputians" (Fowles, p. 468). He feels as if he is in a labyrinth. Even in this situation, he sees a connection between himself and a fictional character. That night when June takes him to Julie and Julie behaves logically about Alison's death, Nicholas starts to believe how these are very realistic for him, and he sleeps with Julie. However, he as a sinner is arrested to be taken to hell, the court, by three devil men, Joe, Anton, a blonde sailor, whom he has supposed to know.

Nicholas questions life, loses track and the concept of time, and wants to stand up to Alison, to reality: "The whole of life became a conspiracy" (500). To Benjamin Woolley (1993), trying to find the root of reality is as difficult as trying to find the source of a river. The court is a big part of the simulation and there are some strange cabalistic symbols such as a giant black hand. In the court, everyone comes in various scary costumes and they introduce themselves as doctors with different names, and there is a coffin Nicholas supposes that is not empty. Maria, at first a servant and then an actress, and Joe, at first a mute caretaker and then an actor, are introduced as doctors with different names. Lily is Doctor Vanessa Maxwell and Rose is Doctor Margaret. Conchis is also a doctor and the rest.

The third order of Baudrillard refers to the absence of reality. Nicholas becomes paranoid because he does not know what the real is. The characters in the novel explain their thoughts

in terms of Freudian concepts or psychology about Nicholas in court, on the other hand, “improbability, along with the enigmatic but effective methods Conchis employs, indicates that Conchis has a different cause in mind for Nicholas’s emotional impotence, a cause we may describe more completely with Jung’s model of the psyche” (Raper, 1988, p. 66). Lily is chosen as a scapegoat and they want Nicholas to whip her. He remembers the situation of Conchis in the war, about how he has been forced to kill guerrillas. However, he cannot realize the value of freedom of choice at the same time. He has never realized that they have already taken his freedom in this simulation. And he is forced to see a movie that Lily is shown. Lily becomes successful by telling lies with her body. He has likened Lily to Mirabelle, a puppet in Deukans’s gallery, that symbolizes fidelity, but pornographic visions of Lily mean infidelity for Nicholas. Baudrillard (1994) explains pornography’s purpose with another example about the Loud family. The family acts their roles without any script, and they behave as if they are in daily life, so the audience feels as if they are in this family’s house while watching them. This is the pleasure provided by the microscopic simulation that turns reality into hyperreality. It is valid for pornography as well. Besides, Baudrillard (1990) in *Seduction* says that pornography is “truer than true” (60).

After everything ends, Nicholas thinks about whether he has seen a hallucination or not. He returns to the villa and finds the costumes of Lily and Robert Foulkes, and also finds Apollon’s bugle and a tale ‘Prince and The Magus’ that gives the message that everyone creates their realities. As Conchis has said before, everyone is his/her own psychic. However, he still waits for the Hironnelle scene that has never been staged. He begins to see life as a detective novel, he is still in simulation, so he searches for the reality about Conchis and others. He learns that Alison is not dead, and she is also a part of the play. Mitford does not say anything special and he also cannot learn anything from Leverrier. He realizes that all documents, letters, etc. are fake. He finds a man named Conchis who died four or five years ago. Finally, he finds the twins’ mother and hears different things about Lily and the others.

The fourth order of Baudrillard refers to pure simulacrum, and after that, hyperreality appears. Hyperreality becomes a direct murderer of the meaning of reality. In this sense, Lily becomes a simulacrum that is “an image without resemblance” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 257). At first, she is Lily Montgomery, then Julie, Vanessa, and finally Lily de Seitas. Not only Lily but also Rose, Conchis, Joe, Maria, etc., who create their realities, become a part of simulacra. Nicholas never knows their real identities. He has thought that everything created by Conchis is real in simulation, in Phraxos, because he has felt, seen, touched, and heard all these. In the end, he changes and only thinks about Alison, and meets Jojo with whom he never thinks of getting into intimacy. When he sees Alison in the park, he thinks that they are watched and then, he realizes that he is in reality, in London, with Alison. Nicholas accepts the meaninglessness of life and tries to save himself from becoming a simulacrum. All the threads of his life are in his hands now. Another important thing is that Nicholas understands his feelings about Alison are not about sex but love. He manages to exit from the cave and begins to see reality. Barbara L. Hussey (1983) says that *The Magus* explains to us our relations with fiction and how we give them a place in our worlds, and it gives us an understanding of reality.

Following several bewildering experiences that Nicholas encounters (including the faked suicide of Alison and an elaborate masque composed of figures from mythology, witchcraft, and the occult), he is brought to an existential confrontation with himself, being shown the

nature of his personality as it appears to others, and his delusory freedom. Shocked by the unpleasant picture of himself drawn by the participants in the psychological masque, Nicholas describes himself as a victim, as "someone who has inflicted on him without being given any real choice" (365). Conchis replies, "That sounds an excellent definition of man" (365). This seems to be the existential truth to which Conchis (and Fowles) has guided Nicholas (and the reader). However, if Nicholas is "man", Conchis has cast himself in the more arrogant role of God; in fact, Nicholas later learns that the masque is referred to as the godgame by those who play roles within it.

## CONCLUSION

This controversial novel by John Fowles about the concepts of reality, illusion, postmodern individual, and truth provides the reader a decent insight to better understand the condition of the postmodern subject. Through the "I" perspective, the reader gets to have an idea about what goes on in the mind of a postmodern subject first-hand. Nicholas Urfe goes through a kind of displacement. The postmodern subject appears to be a character that is completely lost in every sense. Unable to find himself a place in society, he experiences isolation and alienation. Besides, he experiences an attachment problem to the people around him including his family. He is almost at a point where it is possible to call him dehumanized as he does not even suffer the losses of his parents after their air crash. This state of being lost is also applicable to his place in religion as he is not a believer. On the other hand, he is incapable of getting involved in proper social interaction. He attempts to escape from the feeling of dedication and devotion through sexual intercourse. He suppresses his emotional side entirely.

Nicholas appears as a character who has no clue what he is surrounded by and what he wants to perceive in life. For a long time, he pursues his dreams to become a poet as he thinks writing poetry manifests his inner state but he realizes that his writings have no appeal whatsoever and gives up writing entirely. Until his application to the school in Phraxos, he is incapable of finding what he likes and spends a great deal of time in other sorts of jobs that he has no will to be a part of. The struggle to find what he likes is not limited to his writings and jobs; he is not able to find "the person" for himself either. He also confesses that he chooses not to feel anything on purpose. In a conversation he had with Alison, he claims that he finds everything meaningless and one tries for nothing, the struggle that they are in is pointless because no matter how hard you try to achieve one thing, something comes up and you lose it no matter what. He has issues with dedication in terms of love and affection; therefore, he gets involved in several sexual intercourses to escape things in a way. Although he had Alison around him, someone who loves and wants to be with him unconditionally, he fails to return the feelings, and Alison's love remains unrequited until finally he is shown Alison's worth by Conchis.

It is possible to see how the character thinks, perceives, and reacts to things. As is due in postmodernism, the reader experiences a general suspicion felt by Urfe towards the ideas and reason. As a person, Urfe first seems to be a decentered character from all the concepts around him. He distances himself from his family, all sorts of feelings he is likely to feel and any commitments he might experience. In the beginning, he pretends to be someone else to please his father but as his parents leave for India, he believes that there are no obstacles left for him to not be the person he thinks he is and enters his bubble that distances him from everyone and everything.

Although Nicholas expresses everything he feels and experiences in his narration, we are not able to have a perfect vision of his character. As "John Fowles's fiction conducts a complex interplay between the deconstruction and re-inscription of traditional gender roles" (Ferrebe, 2004, p. 207), what the author aims here is to show that the understanding of a character until that time is deconstructed. The characters no longer possess the known qualities and are somehow sucked into a state of the unknown. It is nearly impossible to have reliable and consistent information about the character and that is why the novel seems like "a bildungsroman, and its narration focalized through an uninitiated narrator-past-tense, yet still paradoxically unenlightened, still enveloped by the mystification of the domaine" (Ferrebe, 2004, p. 210).

To provide a better analysis, we see that Nicholas is involved in a godgame performed by Conchis and his crew. It turns out the ultimate goal is to analyze Nicholas's character and make sense of his actions and words, and also "the aim of trials set by Conchis is to correct Nicholas's conception of reality and truth as a way of bringing about his transformation from an egotistic woman collector to a truly creative writer, a description of the mature artist/magician" (Onega, 1996, p. 41). This analysis conducted by the group of alleged psychiatrists makes everyone better understand the delusional condition Nicholas is in because of his rootlessness, lack of a center to hold on to, and questioning the significance and state of reality in one's life. He is described as a character whose social skills are not so bright. His only intercourse appears to be sexual. Other than that, he is involved in acts of isolation in terms of his profession and his beliefs. He states several times that he is not a believer and this isolation also occurs in his profession as he has no sort of connection to his students or the people that he works with. His job is not even close to being a sort of concern for him. According to the analysis, Nicholas is an introvert that manages to isolate himself from his surroundings in one way or another. This isolation is mainly achieved through his pleasures.

What seems to be striking is that Fowles perfectly describes the shift that the postmodern subject experiences. He uses the term "homo solitarius" to describe the new human beings. He claims that the western homo sapiens will become homo solitarius. Raffat (2014, p. 32) described homo solitarius as one who lived by and for himself without any urge to participate in the human drive for propagation. Nicholas can also be considered a character who lived for himself without any concern for propagation.

The main reason why Nicholas is going through such phases of paranoia, depression and delusion is explained by his past. The incidents happening without involving the character but completely affecting the way things unfold for them shape the characters' personalities. Lily in her speech claims that the past experiences shape his socially incapable and selfish character. This part can be oriented towards any postmodern character. The post-war conditions forced the people to experience and expect unexpected things to happen and change the course of the following incidents. This, in a way, made the character live without purpose. The situation is the same for Nicholas. He lives without purpose and he finds it pointless to try to achieve anything as you will end up losing it no matter what.

Another point that needs recognition is the fact that he is told to have homosexual tendencies. While talking about the characteristics that make Nicholas an unreliable person for marriages such as disloyalty, selfishness, and tactlessness, Lily mentions his likely homosexual tendencies. It is convenient because the concept and question of homosexual identity are

briefly considered in the novel. At some point, Nicholas has questions about his sexual preferences and he ends up considering being involved in intercourse with the boys at his school. Although this never takes place in the novel, the idea to be involved in a homosexual relationship is considered by the character who has dominating heterosexual qualities.

The quotation from Akbar saying “postmodern man is driven with doubt and is still looking for a role” (2004) describes Nicholas’s situation until the time he was hinted that he should give up on looking for a role. After being a part of the godgame and feeling completely used, he is told to learn how to smile by Conchis. At this point, although he was in a constant search for his role, he realizes that he is never given the chance to choose his role or the game nor was it meant to happen that way. His resemblance to Iago in the sense that he is involved in games and surrounded by manipulative issues indicates that he understands you have to accept the role you are given without needing to understand why.

The concept of freedom is also thoroughly analysed by Fowles; Nicholas wants to be free and would stop at nothing to obtain it. Although he appears to be a free character at the start, he is later prisoned by his curiosity to find out more about what he is going to encounter next in the game. His freedom is in the hands of Conchis. At this point, it would be appropriate to mention Conchis’s role as the magus in the tarot. The magus symbolizes a divine being reflecting the god. Nicholas is expected to reach his realization through Conchis’s obscure hell.

Art is the means through which Nicholas acquires knowledge about life. This quest for knowledge is significantly compared to the quest undertaken by the Fool in the Tarot myth. The connection between *The Magus* and the Tarot is concretized in two ways. These ways involve the quest for knowledge by both Nicholas and the Fool in the Tarot. McDaniel goes on to argue that ‘each of the twenty-one cards through which the Tarot Fool passes is a separate riddle for him to solve before he can progress to the succeeding card and its particular lesson. Nicholas has to trace, to connect the mysterious riddles of the texts and the various stories he hears to achieve self-realization. Also, just as the Fool is helped by the magus, “so is Nicholas who is guided by Conchis to learn the implications of the godgame” (Salami, 1992, p. 127).

This deprivation of freedom is a means for Nicholas to achieve self-realization. The entire godgame is performed for Nicholas to achieve a sort of self-realization: “The Magus is an allegory of the manner and meaning of the search for self-realization” (Olshen, 1976, p. 916). It would be consistent to mention that Fowles aimed to prove that the grand stories, told by Conchis in the novel, that took place in history are also subjective and twisted. The stories told by Conchis raise the amount of suspicion and doubt Nicholas had in him. After being deceived by his stories, Nicholas finds himself in a state where he starts to question everything Conchis tells him. Although in the beginning, he believes in them without questioning, he gets to suspect their reality as he listens and witnesses; that may also be why “Nicholas immerses readers in a vicarious experience of his participation in the god-game, thus encouraging their identification with and empathy for his earlier self” (Lenz, 2014, p. 150).

Stuart Sim (2011) describes the concept of reality that postmodernism provides as the result, in the postmodern condition, is a loss of a sense of reality and so the emergence of a new kind of flatness, of depthlessness, a new kind of a sense of superficiality in the most literal sense. This point shows that the postmodern subject is deconstructed from reality in terms of losing connection with the original and experiencing rootlessness in the sense that Nicholas suffers

from the great pain of being lost. On the other hand, it is expected that the "I" perspective would give a sort of sense that the story being told by someone who witnesses and interprets things first-hand would be the most accurate. But we see that no story that Conchis tells is reliable. On the other hand, Urfe also appears to be an unreliable source. The more frustrated and used he feels, the more he sees himself as a victim and twists his narrations in doing so. The suspected and twisted concept of reality haunts the character throughout the entire novel.

In this sense, the postmodern subject today is urgently seeking his/her identity and reality all the time. As Bauman states that "[i]n the world of hyperreality, we are all like hostages—in the sense that we have been picked without relation to what we have done and that our fate will bear no relation to what we might yet do" (Bauman, 2003, p. 153). According to Bauman, hyperreality creates its own rules while an individual is experiencing it. As a result, it is arbitrary and cannot be changed. As a result, it has been suggested in this study that the postmodern person sought solace and an organizing principle in their particular experience of hyperreality.

To conclude, the postmodern subject is in a state of being lost. It is unable to find a place for itself in the post-war world. Everything seems meaningless and as a result, it isolates and alienates itself and ends up being socially incapable. It is not able to devote itself truly to anything. In *The Magus*, the subject appears to require self-realization as he relates everything to the happenings around him rather than his decisions and actions. The idea that their world is shaped by the incidents rather than their doings is quite common. The subject is not able to speak of a certain reality. Everything they were told hitherto cannot be believed blindly and deserves to be questioned.

Integration for Nicholas is thus provided by the same acceptance of the manufactured reality of self-image. He has to have complete control over practically everything to maintain the coherence of his self-image as a powerful and distant man. Being a part of Conchis's mysterious "godgame" attracted and irritated him because of this. As a result, he maintains continual skepticism and cynicism about the validity of things throughout the entire book. His greatest worry may be that he would one day reveal his "real" self, as this would be the end of the created Nicholas.

What we may also conclude from the analysis in the paper and Fowles's focus on the postmodern subject is that schizophrenia has become chronic for those who are trying to question the concepts of truth and reality with a lost sense of belonging and rootlessness, especially after the universally felt traumatic incidents such as the great wars. It does not seem easy to get rid of that pathological issue of becoming paranoid about what is truth and whether the world we are living in is authentically real or not. Nicholas seems to experience issues of paranoia, even schizophrenia when he is exposed to such questions in villa Bourani. Thus, Fowles creates a very striking example of the postmodern version of paranoia and schizophrenia with references to Freudian psychoanalysis to be able to reflect the structure of the human mind when it tries hard to perceive what reality would be like.



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